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PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE TERMINOLOGICAL DEFINING OF ELEMENTS OF THE STRUCTURAL PLAN OF THE MUSIC FLOW: MUSICAL SENTENCE

The approach to the analysis of form, which is based on music plans (rather than primarily on the identification of a pattern) enables a music work in its entirety, particularly the musical sentence, to be examined in a new way. Bringing the music sentence into the focus of analysis is bound to include analysis of all music plans. Despite the fact that music plans are seen as interacting with each other in the process of constitution of the music flow, in the analytical procedure that aims to examine the sentence priority is given to thematic and tonal plans, while the structural plan, as the mainstay of this process, remains insufficiently analyzed.

In the last decade, there were many works dealing with the problems of music syntax to some or full extent, in which the analysis of the structural level of musical sentence occupies a special place.¹ All these works point to a marked vitality of the wide range of questions raised in this analysis. There is a considerable degree of coordination in terms of certain arguments, but there are also numerous dilemmas (especially concerning the musical sentence) that prompt new investigations.

Arguments that are common to all these works can be grouped around four basic points of departure.

1. Emphasizing the evident need to reexamine the definition according to which Musical sentence is brought to an end by a cadence, and which has for more than half a century been the point of reference for the analysts examining it. The problems concerning the reexamination of the definition of musical sentence were first addressed by Berislav Popović,² who pointed to some of its weaknesses. Aiming to achieve universality of the definition itself, he particularly explained the need for substituting the term “*cadence* with the term *limit*, which would, by implication, come to include all that which is entailed in the notion of limit, in other words, it would include all the ways in which they can appear in different compositional procedures”. Concluding that “although it seems that it is not possible, at least for now, to give a definition of musical sentence/phrase that would be universally true and applicable, the following

¹ The selected works examining the musical sentence are put in the order of their publishing: Anica Sabo, *Rukoveti Stevana Mokranjca – pristup formalnoj analizi*, Mokranjčevi dani, Negotin, 1997, 29-55; Berislav Popović, *Muzička forma ili smisao u muzici*, Klio, Beograd, 1998; Tatjana Ristić, *Prolegomena teoriji muzičke sintakse*, habilitation work, Beograd, 1999, Library of the Faculty of Music; Miloš Zatkalik, O nekim magičnim formulama, energiji i Bramsu, onako uzgred, *Novi Zvuk*, Beograd, 1999; Olivera Stambolić, *Rečenica u simfonijama L. van Beethovena*, MA Thesis, archive of the Faculty of Music, 2003; Miloš Zatkalik, Milena Medić, Smiljana Vlajnić, *Muzička analiza I*, CD ROM, Klio, 2003; Anica Sabo, Mokranjčeve rukoveti – Uticaj interpretacije na analitičku proceduru, in: *Folklor – Muzika – Delo*, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Beograd, 2004, 94-103; Miloš Zatkalik i Olivera Stambolić, *Rečenica u tonalnoj instrumentalnoj muzici*, Beograd, SIGNATURE, 2005.

² Berislav Popović, op. cit., chapter: *Muzička rečenica/fraza i njen sastav*, 235-272.

definition can, nonetheless, be proposed: a musical sentence is the smallest integral part of the music flow”.³ This definition has been accepted in all institutions of higher education in our country.

2. The relationship toward the length of musical sentence is put on new foundations. The categories of small/big and regular/irregular are no longer considered to be primary, but instead the focus is on the “factor of the arbitrariness and freedom of creative choice which is at work where the length of a sentence is concerned, as well as on the fact that the length of a sentence is not a valid criterion for the status of the musical sentence/phrase as a musical-syntactic element”.⁴
3. All authors agree, on at least two levels, on the matter of complexity of the procedure accompanying the analysis of the musical sentence. First, the sentence as the autonomous entity of the music flow is part of a whole, so it necessarily bears the mark of the work to which it belongs. Therefore, its identification is often very difficult and the distinguishing of its characteristics means taking account of the context to which the sentence belongs, which can sometimes give rise to very complicated dilemmas. Second, manifestations of musical components and the possibilities of their endless combining and regrouping in the music flow inevitably lead to an infinite variety in the realization of a musical sentence. Therefore, it is safe to say that it “vitaly defies normative restriction”.⁵ This situation normally raises the following question: bearing in mind the author’s individual idiom, how does one come to the understanding of the basic element of music speech – the sentence, and, by extension, the work itself?
4. It has already been pointed out that *taking account of* the methodology of analytical procedure, which is primarily based on the studying of music flow, means relying on the music plan. When musical sentence is in the focus of analytical observations, it can be established that on the level of understanding of thematic and tonal plans there is a high degree of correspondence between the points of departure, which, however, does not apply to the structural plan.

The study of the thematic plan relies primarily on the analysis of motivic content. Sources of the arguments for analytical interpretation include selection and identification of the motifs, observation of their transformations and examination of their interaction or opposition. The basic division of sentences according to motivic structure into developmental, selective, developmental-selective and motivically indivisible elements, is accepted.⁶ The tonal plan is affirmed as leading in the process of realization of the musical sentence, especially in the works based on the major-minor system. In examinations that are essentially founded on tonal music, the music plan is, naturally, considered crucial to interpreting and understanding musical sentence.

³ Berislav Popović, op. cit. 226.

⁴ Berislav Popović, op. cit. 227.

⁵ Berislav Popović, op. cit. 237.

⁶ At this point, it might be important to point out that the suggested classification of sentences according to motivic structure can also be found in the analyses of folk songs done by S. St. Mokranjac. Stevan St. Mokranjac, *Srpske narodne pesme i igre s melodijama iz Levča*, (preface), *Srpski etnografski zbornik*, kn. III, Srpska kraljevska akademija, Beograd, 1902, 13-21.

Structural level in a sentence's structure remains open to new research, reflections and specifications, as witnessed by the authors whose works will be the subject of this examination.⁷

The general interpretation of the sentence is, at least to a certain extent, similar in all the writings. The basic form of a sentence's internal structure is said to be the summing structure, designated by the term "standard model"⁸ and expressed by the formula $n+n+2n$.⁹ The standard model expressed by this formula is not treated as a static category, but merely as a starting point for all kinds of transformations and regroupings of the internal structure.¹⁰ Special attention is paid to a structure which can be regarded, according to the distribution of the segments, as a breaking down of $2n+n+n$ and is designated as "permutation of structural elements" (Tatjana Ristić) or "reverse basic formula" (Miloš Zatkalik).

The suggested specification of the structural plan in a sentence departs from the argument about the high frequency of a sentence structure that "represents such a process of development: half-phrase + its repetition (...) + four-bar phrase development of the preceding motifs, which usually begins with segmentation and ends with cadence", as well as that a sentence structure having twice the dimensions $4+4+8$ often "resembles a series of two small and one big sentences".¹¹

Sentences which are said to be twice the dimensions mostly have a very complex internal structure and because their structure is ramified, they are termed complex sentences. It is precisely the structural level of this type of sentence that theoreticians are endeavouring to specify. There is a need to terminologically designate the segments marked n , repeated n and $2n$, as well as to define their interrelationship, identify the degree of autonomy of each and determine the hierarchy between them.

The arguments and certain analyses that have been terminologically classified under the substructural level of the sentence will be hereinafter examined in the following order: Berislav Popović, *Muzička forma ili smisao u muzici (Musical Form or Meaning in Music)* (1998), Tatjana Ristić, *Prolegomena teoriji muzičke sintakse (An Introduction to the Theory of Musical Syntax)* (1999) and coauthors Zatkalik-Stambolić, *Rečenica u tonalnoj instrumentalnoj muzici (Sentence in Tonal Instrumental Music)* (2005).

Berislav Popović believes that there is a "following ascending hierarchy of syntactic elements within a sentence/phrase: motif – syntagmatic group (the smallest formal-metrical whole, a potential sentence/phrase) – sentence/phrase, where lower-order elements form part of the structure of the elements of a higher order." Example I includes the analysis of the first and second theme of Mozart's sonata *KV 533 F-major* II movement (example taken from Borislav Popović's book). The framed four-bar phrase, as "the larger syntagmatic group", is at the beginning of the sentence in the first theme, and in the middle of the sentence in the second theme. The author of the analysis point out that "it is worth noting that in both

⁷ Berislav Popović, op. cit.; Tatjana Ristić, op. cit.; Zatkalik, Stambolić, *Rečenica u tonalnoj...*, op.cit.

⁸ Tatjana Ristić, op. cit., 60.

⁹ Miloš Zatkalik, *O magičnim formulama...* and Tatjana Ristić, op. cit.

¹⁰ Tatjana Ristić, op. cit. chapters *Proširenje standardnog modela* and *Varijabilnost muzičke rečenice*.

¹¹ Dušan Skovran, Vlastimir Peričić, *Nauka o muzičkim oblicima*, Beograd, Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu, 1986, 42.

examples (examples 33a and b), four-bar phrases, as larger syntagmatic groups, have typical characteristics of potential phrases/sentences”.¹²

In the said book, substructure of the sentence is not examined as a separate set of problems, but rather as part of the overall process of its constitution.

This very substantial examination of the composition of musical sentence offers a new perspective of its internal structure, at the same time posing certain dilemmas and questions, such as:

1. How to specify hierarchy: formal-metrical element, syntagmatic group, potential sentence;
2. And specifically, in which circumstances does a syntagmatic group acquire the characteristics of a potential sentence?

In a special section of her text, entitled *Hierarchical relationships within elements of the structural plan*, Tatjana Ristić proposes the introducing of the term *hypermeter*.¹³ Among other things, she points to a need to establish a criterion for the classification of musical meter. According to the author, this classification might contribute to a better understanding of elements of the structural plane in musical sentence. For the purpose of a more systematic analysis of the structural plan, the following terms are suggested: basic formal-metrical whole, hypermeter, potential whole and metrics of higher order.

“Classification of musical meter is performed according to hierarchical value, based on the following criteria:

1. According to the number of primary accents (correlating with the type of bar and tempo parameter) and according to size, they are grouped into **basic (smallest)** formal-metrical wholes. According to motivic material, a type of formal-metrical whole that can be **divisible (complex)** or **indivisible (simple)**, that is, a syntagmatic group, is defined.
2. According to the ascending hierarchy of the criterion of size, **hypermeter**, which is hierarchically higher than basic formal-metrical wholes, incorporates at least two basic formal-metrical wholes (syntagmatic groups).
3. According to the quotient of autonomy, **potential whole** comes after formal-metrical wholes and hypermeter.
4. Based on the arrangement of accents, the following principle applies to all hierarchical levels: from preparation to action (...) in half-phrase, for example, the first bar can be considered “light” and the second “heavy”. This regular alternation of light and heavy bars further constitutes the **metrics of higher order**”.¹⁴

Pointing to the application of suggested terminology, the following is said: “We shall examine syntagmatic groups within the structural plan according to their hierarchical value, starting from the smallest formal-metrical whole to hypermeter to potential wholes”. Suggestions for the ways in which to employ the term syntagmatic group point to its wide application in designating different elements of the structural plan.

¹² Berislav Popović, op. cit. 243-245.

¹³ The term hypermeter taken from William Rothstein, *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music*, Schirmer Books, New York, 1989.

¹⁴ Tatjana Ristić, op. cit., 91.

Example 2 contains a demonstrative analysis with a diagram and commentary. (The composition in question is a very frequently quoted passage from Beethoven's piano sonata based on the model: exposition-repetition-development-cadence $n+n+2n$ – a complex sentence). The diagram clearly shows how certain elements of the structural plan are terminologically designated. In the textual commentary included in the analysis it says the following: a) “a sentence begins with the exposition of corresponding four-bar phrases that seek to integrate into the whole of a higher order – period (...) The qualification of these segments as sentential-periodical is somewhat contingent, so the term (...) 4+4 potential period is better suited; b) “Then comes eight-bar phrase (which simultaneously functions as a hypermeter and a potential sentence) with the structure 2+2+4, which is, unlike the preceding flow, developmental”.¹⁵

Based on the analysis of a larger number of complex sentences, there follows the conclusion that although the formal-metrical units of hypermeter and potential whole are differentiated as terms, they often have corresponding functions; there also follows another conclusion, much like the one in Borislav Popović's book: “Therefore, the following ascending hierarchy of syntactic elements within a sentence can be identified: motif – syntagmatic group – sentence, provided that lower-order elements form part of the structure of elements of the next higher order”.¹⁶

The study is entirely dedicated to the musical sentence, and analysis of the structural plane takes up a prominent place. It references numerous compositions from the period of classicism, namely piano sonatas by Mozart and Beethoven. Despite evident efforts to specify elements of the structural plane of musical sentence, many dilemmas are posed and numerous questions raised.

1. Is it possible to liken hypermeter to potential whole if they are placed on two hierarchical planes?
2. How to specify and correlate the terms hypermeter with potential sentence and potential whole, and in relation to that, how to correlate potential period with potential whole?
3. How to understand the segment of the structural plan characterized as sentential-periodical and, specifically, how would it relate to all the other entities of the structural plan?
4. What kind of unit is constituted by corresponding formal-metrical wholes? Is it a sentence¹⁷ or a period, or should we perhaps introduce the term sentence-period structure?
5. What would cause hypermeter to acquire the characteristics of potential sentence in terms of function?

In their compilation of examples dedicated to the musical sentence in tonal instrumental music, coauthors Miloš Zatkalik and Olivera Stambolić are not that much concerned with the systematization of elements of the structural plan and the problematics of their terminological determination. However, they provide a wide variety of carefully selected compositions and numerous examples intended for individual analysis, making this study an invaluable contribution to the development of theoretical thinking relative to the structure of musical sentence. The chapters *Sentence Structure* and *Complex and potential sentences* are in that respect particularly significant.

¹⁵ Tatjana Ristić, op. cit., 105.

¹⁶ Tatjana Ristić, op. cit., 108.

¹⁷ Dušan Skovran, Vlastimir Peričić, op. cit. 40.

The so-called complex sentence structures, which affirm the formula $n+n+2n$ each time in a new way, are very important for the problematic analyzed herein. The segment that represents exposition is marked **n** and it can be treated in the following ways **a**) as a five-bar phrase – potential sentence (which means that the formal-metrical whole at the same time has the potential for a sentence structure, example 3), **b**) as a musical syntagm (example 4), **c**) as a musical syntagm/potential sentence (there is a possibility in certain situations for the musical syntagm to assume the characteristics of a sentence, example 5), **d**) in what situations is a musical syntagm designated as the structure $n+n$ (example 7), **e**) which segment of the structural plan of the sentence could be termed half-sentence?

Despite the fact that authors are not concerned with the domain of theoretical propositions of certain problems, these questions nonetheless arise, because some of the suggestions for interpretation pose dilemmas:

1. Is it possible to differentiate the application of the terms five-bar phrase, musical syntagm, potential sentence and half-sentence for certain elements of the structural plan of the sentence?
2. What conditions does a formal-metrical whole have to fulfill to be termed a musical syntagm?
3. What conditions does a formal-metrical whole have to fulfill to be termed a potential sentence?
4. To which higher hierarchical level do corresponding four-bar phrases rise?

A study that sets itself the task of registering and critically analyzing the terms used for denominating specific elements of the structural plan in a musical sentence will match expectations only if it offers a systematized solution to existing illogicalities and dilemmas.

However, today, when reflections on this problematic are very intense and results of the attempts at terminological specification are insufficiently grounded in the expert and pedagogical practice, it is impossible to come to such conclusions with much quality. The defining of the terms which could apply to elements of the structural plan in a musical sentence is in an ongoing process of reexamination and it is difficult to predict with certainty its final outcome. The analyses of the structural plan of musical sentences mentioned herein bear the stamp of individuality and defy systematization, and they also advance some new postulates relative to the understanding of the structure of the sentence flow.¹⁸ New questions concerning the already accepted conventions regarding the structural plan are raised.¹⁹

The examination of the structural plan of musical sentences should certainly include analysis of interpretation, which is regularly an important tool for verifying every utterance. Accepting the analysis as a specific form of interpretation and establishing connections with instrumental or vocal interpretation might turn out to be very important in the process of understanding the system of relationships within the structure of a musical sentence.²⁰ Another important question might be posed in relation to the analytical methods which do not regard the sentence as the central area of understanding the music flow.

¹⁸ Miloš Zatkalik, *Šta još možemo naučiti od lingvistike*, Muzička teorija i analiza, Beograd, Signature, 2005, 1-9.

¹⁹ Perhaps one of the most delicate dilemmas is the one concerned with the understanding and defining the relationship between corresponding formal-metrical wholes (half-phrase, four-bar phrase...).

²⁰ These questions are not often raised and it is therefore important to point out their contributions in this field. Tijana Popović, Pojam i elementi “analitičke” interpretacije, *Aspekti interpretacije*, Beograd, 1989.


Dilemmas, vague wordings and even contradictions that can be observed on the level of interpretation of the structural plan call for certain specifications and an acceptable coordination of different attitudes.

Translated by Dušan Zabrdac

Example 1


primer 1

Primer br. 33
 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Sonata za klavir K.V. 533, F-dur, II stav (B-dur)*
 a) prva tema (početna rečenica/fraza)



4 + 2 + 2 + 2

b) druga tema



2 + 2 + 1 + 4 + 2 + 2

Example 2

L. van BEETHOVEN, Op. 10. N° 1.
I stav

$\overbrace{4}^{\text{(slatani) osnovne metričko-formalne celine}} + \overbrace{4}^{\text{(slatani) osnovne metričko-formalne celine}} + \overbrace{8}^{\text{(2-2-4) hipermetar}} + \overbrace{6}^{\text{(slatani) osnovna metričko-formalne celine}}$

potencijalne celine potencijalne celine

Allegro molto e con brio

c: t D⁵ t°

t° VII⁵ t° VII³ t° VII⁵ t° VII⁶ VI D⁵ VII⁷

18 t II° K² D⁷ t D⁵

26 t ° II° D t

Example 3

Primer 76: J. Brams, Sonata za violinu i klavir u A-duru, I stav

Allegro amabile *petotakt - potencijalna rečenica*

A: --- (h:)

Example 4

Primer 77: J. Brams, Sonata za violinu i klavir u d-molu, I stav

Allgro (♩=84) *muzička sintagma* *sekventno ponavljanje*

Vn *P sotto voce ma espressivo* *motiv (m)*

P *P sotto voce*

Example 5

Primer 133: V. A. Mocart, Sonata za klavir u c-molu KV 457, I stav

Molto Allegro *muzička sintagma /* *ponavljanje*
- potencijalna rečenica *korespondentni četvorotakti*

Piano *f* *m1* *p* *m2* *sf* *p*

D (VII)

potencijalni period

Example 6

Primer 49: P. I. Čajkovski, Simfonija br. 4 u f-molu, II stav

muzička sintagma

Oboc *mesto* *motiv* *ponovljen motiv*

Vn I

Vn II

VI

Vc *polukadenca*

Example 7

Primer 91: M. Glinka, Sonata za violu i klavir u d-molu, I stav

prva sintagma (polurečenica) *druga*

Viola

Piano

pp *p* *f*

1 + 1 + 2

muzička interpunkcija unutar rečenice g. VII

Vla

Pno

p

D t